

M

T

THO

o

P

AN
AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE
OF THE LOSS OF THE BARQUE
MARSHAL M'DONALD,
OFF NEWFOUNDLAND,
On her Passage from Quebec to Limerick,
On the 7th of DEC. 1835;
INCLUDING INTERESTING PARTICULARS
OF
THE SUFFERINGS OF THE CREW,

AS RELATED BY
THOMAS GOODWIN and JOSEPH SHEARER, two
of the Survivors, who were landed at Portsmouth,
by the Arab Transport, August 22nd, 1836.

Entered at Stationers' Hall.

BATH:

PRINTED FOR THE EDITOR, BY W. BROWNING,
WALCOT STREET;

AND MAY BE HAD OF MOST OTHER BOOKSELLERS.

1836.

AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE

OF THE

MAINESE E. H. HONORABLE

OF THE

On the 17th of Decr. 1836

to the ship of Decr. 1836

INTERESTING NARRATIVE

THE BATTLESHIP OF THE

THE BATTLESHIP OF THE

THE BATTLESHIP OF THE

THE BATTLESHIP OF THE

THE BATTLESHIP OF THE

THE BATTLESHIP OF THE

1836

are
scar
app
ly
few
wri
priv
of
des
sion
the
sim
per
the
of
pre
mo
po

ADVERTISEMENT



THE unfortunate men whose sufferings are detailed in the following pages, were scarcely landed at this place before I was apprised of their arrival, and of their truly forlorn and destitute condition, and a few days afterwards I was called upon to write an account of their hardships and privations.

Anxious at all times to assist the child of misfortune, I yielded cheerfully to this desire, and from the notes in my possession, I have prepared this pamphlet for the press. I have confined myself to a simple detail of their statement, and am perfectly unconscious of having exceeded the truth, or that I have given it the gloss of fiction.

I never witnessed any scene that impressed my mind more deeply, or that moved the sympathies of my heart so powerfully as these deplorable objects of

commiseration. These men in the days of their youth are reduced to the lowest state of abject wretchedness; this affected me, and their personal appearance would move a stouter heart than mine in pity towards them. The consideration of their being one Irish and the other Scotch, therefore, without any place of legal settlement, and destitute of friends who are capable of administering to their numerous wants, has induced me to lay the following pages before the Public.

I am actuated by a purer principle than proceeds from personal vanity or sordid selfishness:—for should a humane Christian Public benevolently extend their aid to these destitute, yet deserving individuals, I shall be happy as having attained my object, in assisting those who possess so powerful a claim on the sympathy of such as delight in doing good.

MOSES PUMFRE.

Portsmouth, Sept. 1836.

THE

LOSS OF THE MARSHAL M'DONALD,

&c. &c.

THE age in which we live is eminently distinguished for its advancement in science. But for the calamities that attend mankind, we might cherish the belief that human ingenuity had attained the highest summit of perfection. The laudable efforts of the philanthropist have been incessantly directed to lessen the aggregate amount of human woe. There can be no greater or better evidence offered in proof of this remark, than the constant attention that within these few years past, has been paid to the numerous emergencies and dangers that attend the sailor in his perilous passage through the voyage of life, on the boisterous ocean. The British Government has paid a regard to the interests of seamen which is to their credit, and to the high honor of our national character; they have exhibited benevolence as

our principal and prominent feature, and as an object of peculiar importance among Britons. Every improvement which science could suggest, has been adopted in the erection of British vessels; whether such improvements tend to secure their inhabitants from danger in tempestuous weather, by strengthening the ship to bear the violence of the storm, or facilitate their progress on the briny wave. While the structure of vessels has become an object of serious attention, premiums have been awarded to the skilful and experienced mariner, who has also been promoted in the Navy for any improvement in the art of Navigation. For the benefit of seamen on our own coast, additional landmarks have been erected; and to give further security to shipping, the greatest undertaking in England, the Plymouth Breakwater, has been accomplished.

It is remarkable, and worthy observation, that with all the advantages offered to the mariner, the general dangers and hazards of a foreign voyage have not been proportionably diminished, nor has individual misfortune been lessened. The events of the last few years have brought under public observation, a series of disasters at sea, in which the sufferings of the survivors have exceeded the troubles of many of their predecessors in peril and danger. We have read of the numerous misfortunes of the crew of the

Vic
Sir
be
do
pro
of

Bar
bur
han
the
voy
mit
exc
how
the
ma
the
gul
21s

the
Pa
arc
we
can
dan
ple
we

Victory, under Captain Ross; of the loss of the Sir James Spreight, and of many others that could be very easily enumerated; but in few instances do we remember that men have undergone more protracted misery, than the unfortunate subjects of the subjoined narrative.

On the eighth day of November, 1835, the Barque, Marshal M'Donald, of about 350 tons burthen, sailed from Quebec with a crew of fifteen hands, and one passenger, laden with timber, for the City of Limerick. She proceeded on her voyage till the 21st. At several periods she admitted the water, and the fears of the crew were excited as to the safety of the vessel: these fears, however, were allayed by the confidence which the seamen reposed in the superior knowledge, maturer judgment, and greater experience of their Captain, so that nothing, either very singular, or remarkably interesting, occurred till the 21st of November.

Proceeding on our voyage, while we were in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, off the Island of St. Paul's, on the 21st of November, a heavy storm arose, the wind blowing very fresh from the north-west. The storm raged with uncommon violence, carried away our main-top-sail, and did serious damage to our leaky vessel. We entertained a pleasing hope that on the succeeding day the weather would abate, so that we might repair our

loss, and prosecute our voyage. In this we were however disappointed, as each succeeding day increased our privations, and added to our sufferings.

The morning of another day began to dawn upon us, after a long and tedious night of fear, anxiety, and suffering. The sun appeared reluctantly to dispel the darkness of the night. All seemed dreary. Every heart was filled with the deepest gloom and sorrow. The conflicting passions of the mind responded to the awful scene before us. Awful is that scene which is presented to the observation of the unfortunate Mariner. No friendly assistance within his reach, he looks on the melancholy prospect before him in all its horror. The swelling ocean omnipotent in power, bursting its violence on his shattered vessel, the winds also blowing a perfect hurricane, tremendous in strength, and when united with the mighty and mountainous sea, depriving the seaman of all control over his bark. The very sun of heaven involved in such darkness, that its light is all but totally denied; at such a trying and painful moment what heart can refuse its sympathy to human beings in such a situation, witnessing the most awful convulsions of nature, and contemplating all the dangers to which they were inevitably exposed from the storm. Dangers from which there is no hope of escape, however faint and glimmering.

The morning dawned in gloom upon us. Fresh dangers seemed impending, and we were doomed to encounter fresh difficulties. The storm continued unabated, and the vessel sustained a further loss, the loss of her fore-sail and fore-top-sail, the force of the sea carried away also the bulwarks, the stanchions, and the long boat. The vessel was still in a very leaky condition, and while most of the hands were on deck working the pumps, she shipped a heavy sea, and became completely water-logged. Twelve of the crew were washed overboard. Thus was our future progress impeded, and thus was our crew reduced to a state of misery which the pen can but feebly describe. Our trouble encreased at this awful moment. Three of our companions, unable to reach the ship, perished, leaving an unmanagable wreck to the mercy of the tempest with a crew reduced in number by this calamity, and in strength by their continued exertions at the pump, and in performing other duties during the earlier part of the storm. When we needed an increase of hands, we felt a diminution in our number to be a loss which nothing could supply.

When the sea struck the vessel, the Mate was driven by the force of the water between the lee-rigging and the deck cargo. It was midnight, and he called, but for some time he called in vain on the crew to extricate him from his perilous

situation. The crew were anxious for their own safety; yet while they deplored the fate of their companion, they hesitated for awhile to expose themselves to the danger of immediate death. His cries were repeated till the Captain and one of the crew took a lanthorn and went to his assistance, they took him to the cabin, and put him in his berth; in about an hour he called again for help, declaring that he was likely to be drowned even in the cabin. All hands being now below, a more prompt attention was paid to the second call of the mate, when the sad discovery was made of the real state of the ship. The most timid on board had no apprehension of our danger, or that the vessel was filling so quickly with water.

On the discovery of the danger that was inevitable to the whole of the crew if they remained below, we all took to the main-top. Uncheering indeed was our prospect, and melancholy were the sensations felt in every breast, expecting that every hour would terminate our lives, as the tempest still raged with unabated and irresistible violence and fury. we clung however to the rigging with that ardour to which the love of life could alone give birth. Our situation was hopelessly forlorn; our nerves, which were enfeebled by labour and the scene before us, were strengthened, and we were stimulated again to renewed exertion, with renewed vigour, when we thought

on our homes, and of those persons whose future bliss or woe depended on, and would be powerfully influenced by our destiny. For these of our kindred did we principally value life and desire to live.

The Mate was either too much exhausted, or had been too severely injured to ascend the rigging, and day-light presented him to the notice of his companions—a clay-cold and stiffened corpse! We looked on the fate of our companion as if expecting at a period fast approaching us, a similar death. On discovering the death of the Mate, before consigning the body to the deep, it was stripped of its clothing, and two of the men who were most deplorably destitute of clothes, and therefore exposed to a state of greater suffering from the bitter severity of the cold weather, appeared pleased at his death, and actually entered into a pugilistic combat for the dress of their unfortunate fellow companion. We were reduced to that state of misery that the fine feelings of humanity, or of mutual sympathy, were completely extinguished by the severity of individual suffering, and a love of self predominated in every breast to the entire exclusion of every other principle.

Early on the twenty-third the Carpenter, who had sustained a previous injury from being washed overboard the day before, was also discovered dead. The Captain had ordered the masts of the vessel to be cut away at the commencement of our

disasters; the Carpenter was too much injured to obey the command of the Captain, and as the crew were unable to get at the carpenter's tools, the masts were unwillingly permitted to remain; this was one day deeply deplored as a most unfortunate event, but a few hours afterwards exhibited our short-sightedness, for had we cut away the masts as we desired and hoped to do, instant and certain death must have been the inevitable portion of all on board. The Carpenter like the Mate was thrown into the sea but without being deprived of his clothes.

The same day death released another of our companions from his sufferings. The cook, a man of color, was seen to be in a dying condition, when we ascended the rigging, the Captain took with him a bottle, containing a little rum, and with this he endeavoured to allay the pain of the unfortunate sufferer. While however he was pouring the spirits down the throat of the Cook, the vital spark became extinct, the spirit was called before its judge, and the body fell (frozen to death), from the main-top in a state of lifeless inanimation on the deck, and was washed overboard. Thus our number seemed hourly diminishing.

In this situation we continued in the depth of winter, for a period of fifteen days, exposed to all that human beings could possibly endure. Many of our companions, although possessing equally

with their survivors the advantages of youth and bodily strength, unable to bear the intense cold or to exist under such privations as a want of food and clothing, died before our eyes.

Who can expect a correct description of our misery. It would be altogether impossible to depict in proper or just colors the horror of the scene before us, or the deep state of mental gloom and despondency which had taken full possession of every bosom. The swelling of the boundless ocean continued unabated; we saw its awful commotions from the height in which we had sought safety, and to which we had ascended for better security from the danger of the storm. We looked on the waves in which (and that ere long) we expected to be engulfed, with emotions of indescribable agony. What a dreary prospect lay before us. The rain too descended, and so severely cold was the air, that as it fell it froze upon our persons, and we thus assumed the appearance of living masses of ice. The tempest drove our vessel, which we could not manage, in a course of which we had no knowledge. Human skill was of no benefit, and we looked to Heaven only for succour. We became entirely dependent on that omnipotent power who rules alike the wind and the sea, who could alone say to the storm "*peace, be still,*" and lay at the mercy of the

waves, under the control of our only friend and refuge in trouble.

The main top afforded us no shelter; our clothes were insufficient to preserve animal warmth through our bodies, and our water being inaccessible to any of the crew, we were painfully reduced to the necessity of drinking each other's urine. Our stock of food was so slender, that we might be almost described as destitute of provisions also.

When we took to the rigging, immediately after our greatest calamity on the 22nd, we had preserved for our support a handkerchief of bread, weighing, perhaps, about twelve or fourteen pounds. A portion of this bread was daily distributed among the crew, each man's share amounting to no more than the half of a biscuit; this stock of bread divided so sparingly among us was soon exhausted, and on the tenth day we had but three quarters of a biscuit to share among ten men who were starving with hunger. We had foreseen that unless very speedily delivered by the hand of Providence, our stock of provisions would fail, and the misfortune which we dreaded, we were apparently now to encounter. One of the crew, however, at the risk of his life descended into the cabin, to procure if possible a further supply of food. He discovered no trace of the bread locker which had been washed away, but observing a few pieces of pork floating in the cabin, he made these

his prize, and ascended again to the main-top, and on these pieces of pork we subsisted for a period of five days longer. There was a strong feeling prevalent among some of the crew, horrid as it may appear, towards preserving the bodies of the Mate and Carpenter for human food! Indeed our emergencies were so pressing as to drive us to any resource. The hope of a deliverance (although we had no reason or prospect to induce such a hope), enabled the crew to bear their sufferings, and encouraged them to prolong by all the means within their power, the term of their existence.

On the third day we saw a vessel to windward bearing down upon us. We made signal of our distress. At the sight of this vessel, joy was visible in every countenance, and pleasure gladdened every heart. We considered our misery brought to a termination, and could not refrain from returning thanks to God, with tears of gratitude streaming from every eye, for a deliverance so unexpected and providential. How transitory is human happiness, how fallacious are our fondest hopes. While we considered ourselves as safe from danger on board the vessel sent by God to relieve us from our sufferings, and to preserve our lives, she saw our forlorn and destitute condition, she witnessed our distress, and then took in her studding-sails, hauled upon a wind, and sailed again from us. We were thus left to encounter

misfortunes which we could neither foresee nor prevent. The cup of disappointment and sorrow was again raised to our lips, and deeply were we doomed to drink of its bitter contents, even to the very dregs.

A greater degree of human misery has been scarcely ever meted out to mortals, than that under which we were suffering, and we found it difficult to suppress our feelings of resentment and indignation at the cruelty exhibited towards us by the crew of the vessel by whom we had been so unfeelingly neglected. If our distressed condition could not procure us their sympathy, it would be in vain to look among such people under any other circumstance for aid or consolation. The atrocity of such an act is increased by the fact of seamen being equally exposed to danger, and they who have escaped the perils of the storm, and can witness without emotions of pity the sufferings of their fellow men, and cruelly resign them to the hardships, privations, and dangers of such a situation as ours, possess nothing human but the human form—dispositions that debase such wretches far below untutored savages! Who can envy such men their feelings in the moment of calm and deliberate reflection.

On the 6th of December we saw land to the leeward, which we have since conjectured to be Cape St. Mary's, we seemed again to enjoy all the

pleasures of hope. The swelling and boisterous sea drove us however from the land, and despair seized every breast. The steward saw our situation with all its horrors and became a helpless and pitiable maliac, but happily sometime after his reaching land his reason was restored.

On the morning of the 7th of December we again saw land, the current drifted us towards it, and then a heavy sea drove us on shore at St. Shotts, which is justly dreaded by every mariner as a place of danger and death. The vessel was dashed to pieces, and the masts fell towards the shore, and three of the crew who endeavoured to reach the shore by means of the masts perished in their attempt, while the remaining portion of the crew, seven in number, succeeded after many difficulties, in getting on the Island of Newfoundland.

When we landed, we observed but one dwelling house, which was occupied by a respectable and benevolent fisherman; we made towards this house, and were kindly received with all the generous hospitality which characterizes Britons. After three days' rest and refreshment we proceeded on to Trepassey, a small village 15 miles distant, containing a population of about 300 persons. The Captain having been frost-bitten kept behind while means were adopted to produce a cure. The Captain had money, but those who were destitute though more severely afflicted,

could command no kindness to administer to them the relief they needed. The narrators being also severely frost-bitten in their feet and legs; and therefore unable to perform the journey on foot, were provided with horses for that purpose.

On reaching Trepassey, we went immediately to the house of Mr. Syms, but learned that that gentleman and his lady were both at St. John's on a visit. His wife's mother made her appearance, she listened to our tale without betraying the least emotion of feeling on our account. She refused us the shelter of a house, and permitted us to lie down on the snow, till the hearts of a few poor fishermen were moved towards us, while they expressed their just indignation at the unfeeling conduct of Mr. Syms' mother-in-law, they took us to their homes, and humanely did all in their power to contribute to our comfort.

We remained with these poor but hospitable people about a fortnight, till after the return of Mr. Syms from St. John's. Mr. Syms on his arrival refused to provide any place for our accommodation. The inhabitants of Trepassey appeared deeply interested in our welfare, as our feet and legs were so severely frost-bitten as to require surgical attention. The season of the year would not permit the fishermen to follow their calling, and their boats were hauled up and removed some distance from the sea, to preserve them from injury

during the storms and tempests incidental to the winter season. The fishermen proposed to Mr. Syms that if he would allow them the use of his boat, which was the only one fit and ready for sea, they would find themselves and us in provisions, and take us the distance of 90 miles to St. John's, where we could be properly attended to. To this proposal Mr. Syms would not listen, and while we live we shall feel the effects of Mr. Syms' refusal of the request of the fishermen. The legs began to rot from our bodies, and emitted a stench that it was almost impossible to bear. The fishermen appealed, but they appealed in vain to the humane Mr. Syms on our behalf. They threatened to put us out of their houses, and asked for a place of shelter for our reception. We were removed to a house in ruins, the snow penetrated through the dilapidated sides of our wretched habitation. We lay in one corner of the room upon a bed, if a heap of hay without either a blanket or a sheet, could merit that appellation; a hearth-rug, so stiff with frost as to stand in an erect position, was the only covering allowed such men and in such a situation as ours. Our destitute condition moved the sympathy of our ship-mates, who went begging for us, and procured a supply of blankets for our use; still we were permitted to remain in this place, without any attention being paid to our legs from the 10th of December to the 17th of April, a period of four

months and seven days! and during that time, our feet became so putrid as to fall from our legs. The pain this occasioned was so severe that for some time we lost our sight and the faculty of speech. One of the ship's company was kept in Trepassey to wait upon us, and the others went on to St. John's by land.

While we were in Trepassey, in our unenviable and horrid abode, our legs would continue to swell, and blisters would frequently appear visible; we broke these blisters with a pin, but being detected at this, the pin was taken from us, and afterwards we inserted the end of a piece of hay into the blisters on our legs for the purpose of procuring a discharge of the watery matter. Little does Mr. Syms know, or indeed, perhaps, little does he care, what we are likely to suffer in our future life, through his unkindness of disposition towards us.

Had we been cast on a dreary or desolate island without an inhabitant, we could have expected no friendship or assistance. Had we run ashore on an island inhabited by uncultivated heathens or brutalized hottentots, we should have looked for no sympathy or kindness at their hands. Although it is likely, that the natural sternness and cruel dispositions of such people might have been subdued into benevolence by the sad recital of our woe. To say nothing of Christianity, should not

human kindness have taught Mr. Symms a lesson of humanity—

‘To feel another’s woe?’

He was bound by the law of nature to afford protection and assistance to his fellow men in their distress; the law of God is still more imperative, and enjoins the discharge of this duty. These laws, however, and their mandates he equally disregarded, and although filling a high official station in society, he steeled his heart against the piteous supplications of men reduced to the lowest abyss of human wretchedness. We paid dearly for life, by the suffering in which our lives were preserved and protracted while we were on the wreck. Was the sympathy of Mr. Symms in accordance with his duty as a magistrate, or creditable to his reputation as a man? Or could he suppose that, although we were in a state of perfect misery, that we were unworthy his protection, or deserving such stern severity, such unexampled, and unpardonable cruelty? Happily for our national character, happily for mankind too, there are but few such persons as Mr. Symms vested with magisterial authority. In England Mr. Symms would be compelled to retire from the bench in compliance with the powerful and united voice of a humane people, who would despise and condemn such a character as unworthy their respect and attention. Wealth may have placed him above many of the inhabitants of

Trepassey, but the conduct of Mr. Syms would be a disgrace to the poorest or meanest person in the village.

On the 16th of April, a seal-fishing vessel put into Trepassey, wind-bound; on the following day we were taken on board, and sailed for St. John's, where we arrived the next day, the 18th of April. On reaching St. John's, and going on shore, we were immediately visited by the surgeons of that place. One leg was first amputated from the person of Thomas Goodwin, whose sufferings were so excruciating, that it was six weeks before he could be prevailed upon to undergo a second operation, when the other leg was taken off. His companion and fellow sufferer Joseph Shearer, was not in so bad a situation, having but one leg that it was necessary to remove, although the other is rendered entirely useless, the contracted nerves having drawn it out of its natural posture. We remained in St. John's till the 5th of August, when we were put on board the Arab Transport, and sailed for Portsmouth, where we arrived after a pleasant voyage of seventeen days, on the 22nd.

We can present the reader with no correct idea of our feelings of pleasure on landing at Portsmouth. Denied the friendly assistance of Englishmen in foreign countries, to whom we looked for succour; denied surgical assistance at a time when

our limbs were actually perishing from our bodies, and permitted to remain in this pitiable situation during a severe winter, in a habitation that none of the inhabitants considered habitable, with scarcely any fire, while the snow penetrated through our ruinous building, even to our very bed. We were compelled by a British Magistrate to remain in this unenviable state of bodily suffering and mental agony for a period of four months and seven days! A remembrance of past sorrows, and a feeling of most excruciating pain, embittering our anticipations of the future. A remembrance of the past impressed on the memory never to be obliterated, we looked forward to our succeeding days with the gloomiest forebodings. We endured all the dangers of the storm, we partook our full share of the perils of the perilous deep, under which, more than half the number of our companions sunk into the arms of death. Reduced to a state of unutterable woe, we landed with our lives only, on a British Island. We told our melancholy tale to an English Magistrate, but we were disregarded. We survived the dangers of the deep, but through the cruelest neglect of people professing christianity, who had the means of relieving our suffering by expelling the frost from our legs, we are prevented while we live from procuring for ourselves the commonest food. Incapable of exertion, we are thrown on the com-

munity as helpless cripples. Impressed with these sentiments, who can conceive our joy when we were taken on shore at Portsmouth, where, as in most other parts of England, are christians to commiserate the sufferings of the unfortunate child of misery; where, when distress is seen, the tear of sympathy as well as the hand of benevolence is ready to soothe at once the mental grief, and alleviate the bodily pain of the sufferer, requiring such consolation or assistance. On landing at Portsmouth, we were taken to lodgings provided for us by the Parochical authorities, whose kindness and humanity as well as of the governor of the poor, we can never forget, while we have the use of reason, or while memory is faithful to her office, [afterwards they were removed to the Work-house where they still continue]. May the God of Heaven reward our benefactors.

FINIS.

h these
men we
e, as in
ains to
te child
he tear
lence is
nd alle-
ng such
Ports-
d for us
nes; and
ne poor,
e use of
r office,
rk-house
God of